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# The Reason for Recess: Active Children May Do Better in School

By Alice Park

First Lady Michelle Obama is constantly promoting her "let's move" message to Americans, and she may be onto something. Physical activity does the body good, and there's growing evidence that it helps the brain too.

Researchers in the Netherlands report that children who get more exercise, whether at school or on their own, tend to have higher GPAs and better scores on standardized tests. In a review of 14 studies that looked at physical activity and academic performance, investigators found that the more children moved, the better their grades were in school, particularly in the basic subjects of math, English and reading. ([See pictures of how summer programs keep kids' minds sharp.](#))

The data support earlier research that linked exercise with greater productivity and fewer sick days among adults and will certainly fuel the ongoing debate over whether physical-education classes should be cut as schools struggle to survive on smaller budgets. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, students need about one hour of physical activity every day to remain healthy; only 18% of high school students met this requirement in the week before a 2009 survey, and 23% had not exercised at all during that period.

Ironically, the arguments against P.E. have included concerns that gym time may be taking away from study time. With standardized test scores in the U.S. dropping in recent years, some administrators believe students need to spend more time in the classroom instead of on the playground. But as these findings show, exercise and academics may not be mutually exclusive. Physical activity can improve blood flow to the brain, fueling memory, attention and creativity, which are essential to learning. And exercise releases hormones that can improve mood and suppress stress, which can also help learning. So while it may seem as if kids are just exercising their bodies when they're running around, they may actually be exercising their brains as well. ([See a video on how to build a better playground.](#))

## What's Behind the Zombie Bees?

Since 2006, beekeepers across the U.S. have been alarmed by a scary sight: eerily quiet, empty hives. Adult worker bees, normally such industrious laborers, have been abandoning their hives in droves and wandering around in a confused state like insect zombies before dying somewhere away from home.

Researchers first thought a combination of viral and fungal infections was wasting the bee population, but the latest analysis shows that there may be a third culprit — a fly. San Francisco State University biologist John Hafernik discovered the connection by accident after he left a vial of bees on his desk and later discovered they were infested with fly pupae. The flies lay eggs in the bees' abdomen, and the parasitized hosts then abandon the hive, flying in circles before expiring. While having fly eggs in your abdomen is never a good thing, both the flies and the bees also carry the virus and fungus. How all these pathogens interact is still unclear. ([See pictures of a bee beard contest in China.](#))

### **Diversity in The Deep**

The Earth's exhaust system doesn't seem like an ideal place for life, but underwater hydrothermal vents that spew forth the chemical waste of the planet's volcanic activity are a haven for deep-sea creatures. A team led by researchers in the U.K. that studied vents in the Antarctic Ocean found never-before-seen species of yeti crab and starfish and a shockingly white octopus, all of which live off hydrogen sulfide and carbon dioxide instead of oxygen. Other animals that populate vents in other oceans were noticeably absent, possibly because of the icier temperatures that only the hardest fauna can withstand.

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